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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: AMEMBASSY, MADRID

DESP. NO. 891

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

DATE: February 19, 1957

REF:

27 For Dept. Use Only	ACTION: NEA-4	DEPT. IN: Rm/R-2 EUR-5 IO-4 USUN-1 P-2 OIR-8
	REC'D: 2-25	FOR OTHER: CIA-12 OSD-4 Army-4 NSA-4 JAIG-2 USIA-10

SUBJECT: Arabia's King Saud Completes Official Visit to Spain

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Following his official visit to the United States, which was widely applauded by the Spanish press, Saudi Arabia's King SAUD arrived in Spain on February 10, 1957 aboard a U.S. Air Force Constellation for a week's stay. Greeted at the airport by Generalissimo FRANCO, most of the Spanish Cabinet, and other officials including U.S. Ambassador LODGE, the King then drove with the Generab through streets lined with interested spectators and colorful flag displays to his quarters at the Moncloa Palace. At one point in his progress he was even accompanied by the strains of "Swanee River", as interpreted by a Spanish military band.

During the next four days the royal visitor swept through a taxing schedule of interviews and other engagements. General Franco came for an audience at the Moncloa Palace and later offered the King a gala dinner at the National Palace. His Majesty reciprocated with a luncheon at the Arabian Embassy. On other occasions the King was entertained by the assembled Ambassadors of the Arab nations represented in Madrid and by the Sultan of Morocco; he responded with a reception in honor of Madrid's officialdom and the diplomatic corps, and with a dinner for the Moroccan sovereign. His busy days were also filled with visits to Spanish military installations, the University of Madrid, the still embryonic Hispano-Arab Institute of Culture (to which he promised a number of books), the National Orphanage of the Pardo (where he donated some $10,000 and a large number of toys), and in general sightseeing.

King SAUD received a Libyan delegation headed by Prime Minister Mustafa BEN HALIM, which arrived in Madrid on February 12, and accepted its invitation to visit Libya en route home. Concluding their official visit to Madrid on February 14, the King and his party departed by air for Andalucia. A communique issued at the time by the Spanish Office of Diplomatic Information reported that the King had discussed matters of common interest with Spanish officials, and that it had been agreed to sign a treaty of friendship in the near future. According to the release,

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Spain and Saudi Arabia promised to work together for peace and prosperity in the Middle East within the framework of the United Nations.

Unable to land in Granada on the 14th because of bad weather, the royal party flew on to Seville. During the remainder of their stay in Spain, they saw the sights of Seville and Cordoba and were entertained by both municipalities. His Majesty announced his intention to cooperate in the Hispano-Islamic Exhibition now being planned by the City of Cordoba. Although illness prevented the King from visiting Granada as he had planned, two of the princes made the trip with an escort and were royally received.

On February 17 the King and his party departed from Seville by Saudi aircraft for visits in Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. As a parting gesture he dispatched a telegram to General Franco expressing thanks for the many courtesies shown him in Spain and hope that his visit would "strengthen the bond of friendship and cooperation between our two peoples."

As will be noted from the enclosed cuttings, King Saud's visit received voluminous and friendly coverage in the Spanish press. His qualities as a statesman and his moderating influence in the troubled Middle East were especially praised. Spain's pride at being a point of contact and understanding between the Moslem and Western nations was again evident; Arriba on February 12 proclaimed that "Spain offers herself once again as an indispensable bridge between two civilizations."

The possible significance of the King's meeting in Madrid with the Sultan of Morocco was not lost on Spanish editorialists. Ya's Tangier correspondent on February 15 speculated on the prospects for a Rabat-Madrid-Ryad axis to reinforce the anti-Communist bloc of Moslem nations. This axis, in his view, would be allied to the Baghdad Pact countries through a Moroccan-Iraqi agreement, and to the Western nations through Spain. (See the Embassy's report on the Sultan's visit in despatch 890 of February 19, 1957.)

Still another theme was given considerable play in Madrid press comment on the visit: Arabian and Spanish concern for an early resolution of the Suez Canal impasse. Writing in Hoja del Lunes on February 11, authoritative commentator Pedro GOMEZ APARICIO reminded his readers that the Spanish formula for a settlement advanced at the first London Conference is still pertinent and viable.

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Comment: King Saud's visit will be long remembered and cited by the controlled Spanish press as another evidence of Spain's prestige

and popularity in the Moslem world.

Shortly before the arrival of the royal party in Madrid, Ambassador Lodge received an indication from the Saudi Arabian Ambassador that the King would like to visit one of the air bases the United States is constructing in Spain. The Embassy immediately communicated with the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which agreed that such a visit could well be included in the King's schedule. Detailed arrangements for him to visit the base at Torrejon on February 13 were accordingly worked out by U.S. and Spanish Air Force representatives.

On the morning of the 13th the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Embassy that the King was ill and had cancelled his schedule for the entire day. As he was to depart on February 14 for southern Spain, the Torrejon visit had therefore to be dropped.

For the Ambassador:

Richard A. Johnson
Counselor of Embassy

Enclosure:

As stated.

Department, pass to

AmEmbassy, Jidda.